

Item #30: Range

Evaluation Objectives: To evaluate if Forest Plan projections for forage use are accurate.

Methods: Amount of permitted and actual use.

Evaluation: The Forest Plan (page II-9) estimated that permitted grazing use during the monitoring period would average 5,900 and 6,200 animal unit months (AUMs). It was also anticipated 350 acres of range improvements and the completion of 5 allotment management plans per year. During the monitoring period, grazing programs were below the Forest Plan estimates due to inactive grazing allotments. For example, a total of 2,328 AUMs were authorized in 2007 (Table 30-1), which is well below Forest Plan projections. On the Swan Ranger District, all allotment management plans are complete. Planning for the Lemonade Springs and Island Meadows Allotments was recently completed through an EA and FONSI. The Swaney Allotment EA is currently being prepared with a target decision in 2015.

As of 2010, there are 9 active allotments on the Swan Lake and Tally Lake Ranger Districts (Table 30-1). Three allotments became vacant during the Forest Plan monitoring period (Table 30-2). These allotments became vacant because the permits were issued at a time when the majority of the suitable range was transitory range and utilized the forage created by vegetative management, such as thinning, timber harvest, and prescribed fire. Since these allotments have been vacant, transitory range has decreased to a point where they are no longer viable.

Table 30-1. Active Grazing Allotments on the Flathead National Forest.

Name	District	Acres	Cow/Calf Pairs	2008 Authorized AUMs
Lemonade Springs /Island Meadows	Tally	9,865 10,066	140	658
Swaney	Tally	15,322	82	371
Barber Creek	Swan	8,217	25	132
Browns Meadow	Swan	16,020	32	169
Holland	Swan	20,808	50	265
Kerr Mountain	Swan	10,902	25	83
Piper Creek	Swan	5,619	5	26
Wild Bill	Swan	15,950	118	624
Totals		112,769	477	2,328

The vacant allotments in Table 30-2 met the necessary criteria to be closed through an administrative decision by the Forest Supervisor. These allotments were administratively closed on May 7, 2010.

Table 30-2. Vacant Allotments on the Flathead National Forest that were closed in 2010.

Name	District	Vacant Since
Smith Creek	Swan	1988
Lion Creek	Swan	1982
Elk Creek	Swan	1989
Glacier Creek	Swan	1980
Herrig Creek	Tally	1996

Recommended Action: Continue to monitor permitted and actual range use.